United Nations E/2003/65

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 May 2003
English
Original: English/French

Substantive session of 2003
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 2003
Item 1 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note aims to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council. It contains proposals of Member States as well as of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system on themes for both segments. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies and of the Secretary-General are also included in the note.

The Secretary-General suggests that the theme of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 be: "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". A part of the coordination segment could accordingly be devoted to "Coordination issues of the United Nations system activities in least developed countries". It is suggested that the coordination segment adopt, as a second theme, "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system".

* E/2003/100.

03-35970 (E) 060603 100603

1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on the themes for the high-level and for the coordination segments of the substantive session of 2004 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In paragraph 53 of annex I to its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly decided that, with regard to the theme for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council, following consultations with Member States and, through the Secretary-General, with members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council; and that, at the annual substantive session, the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision during the substantive session, if possible, but in any case not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

3. It should be recalled, at the outset, that the Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2001/320 decided to consider, at a substantive session before 2005, devoting a high-level segment to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/CONF.191/11), and to consider later in the Decade further options for such review and coordination.

A. Proposals of Member States

4. The Secretary-General had consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 21 March 2003, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Greece, on behalf of the European Union: "Least Developed Countries";

(b) Azerbaijan: "Strengthening the capacities of the Economic and Social Council in relevant areas of crisis management: economic, social and environmental rehabilitation of affected countries";

(c) Benin, on behalf of the Group of the Least Developed Countries: Resource mobilization for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(d) Congo: "Mobilization of resources for the eradication of poverty in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(e) Croatia: "Integrated water resource management";

(f) Japan: an issue relating to least developed countries;

(g) South Africa: "In the context of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, a review of the progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals";

(h) United States of America: "Agricultural trade and development";

(i) Morocco:

(i) "Promotion and strengthening of regional cooperation among developing countries and its impact on development in the context of globalization";

(ii) "Viewing the debt problem as a key factor in policies to combat poverty";

(iii) "Coordination of efforts to bridge the digital divide in the development cooperation policies of the various agencies and partners of the United Nations system".

B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations system

5. The United Nations Secretariat consulted the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):

(i) "Financing slum improvement for poverty eradication and economic development";

(ii) "Poverty eradication through sustainable urbanization, with particular focus on the least developed countries";

(iii) "Disaster management: opportunities and challenges in linking United Nations relief and development agencies in promoting development";

(b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

(i) "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(ii) "Promoting sustainable development in the twenty-first century: translating commitments of the United Nations conferences and summits into action by promoting capacity-building and problem solving in the developing countries";

(iii) "Fostering public-private partnerships in developing countries for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development";

(iv) "Information society and development: the role of information technology in economic and social development";

(c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:

(i) "An initiative for the development and reconstruction of conflict-stricken countries in the Middle East";

(ii) "Promoting peace-building through development in regions of instability and conflict";

(iii) "Trade facilitation in the light of the new world trading system";

(iv) "Improving the quality of international trade statistics and increasing their coverage to secure accurate records of trade transactions under the new directions of liberalization of trade";

(v) "The review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(d) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development:

(i) "Strengthening the development dimensions of the evolving multilateral trading system";

(ii) "Globalization, migration and labour mobility";

(iii) "Enhancing global peace and security through economic development";

(e) United Nations Environment Programme: "Sustainable production and consumption patterns";

(f) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: "Transition from relief to development";

(g) United Nations Population Fund: "Promoting consensus for sustainability in multilateral policies and operational activities for enhanced achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and towards rapid poverty eradication";

(h) World Food Programme: "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(i) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS:

(i) "The impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls — reaching the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment; a prerequisite for a successful implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" adopted by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2001;

(ii) "Reversing the global spread of HIV/AIDS — integrating the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2001";

(j) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(k) International Monetary Fund: themes for the segments of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 should be closely related to the issues under review in the context of the Millennium Declaration and should be in line with the thematic approach considered in the ongoing deliberations on integrated follow-up to conferences;

(l) International Maritime Organization: "Fostering a global approach for improved security in international transport as a component of equitable trade and sustainable development";

(m) International Fund for Agricultural Development: "Coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010";

(n) International Atomic Energy Agency:

(i) "The role of technology-driven systems for sustainable development";

(ii) "The role of the United Nations in promoting technical advancement and growth in developing countries";

(o) Committee of Experts on Public Administration: "Revitalizing public administration".

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

6. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (see A/CONF.199/20, chap. I) called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation. Recommendations in regard to such themes could be made by the Commission on Sustainable Development. It also invited the Council to make full use of its high-level, coordination, operational activities and the general segments to effectively take into account all relevant aspects of the work of the United Nations on sustainable development.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

7. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may wish to choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in the relevant forums (see General Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex) specified that the Council, at its high-level segment, should consider major issues for international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. The high-level segment should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the

United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (para. 252 (a));

(f) It may also be recalled that, in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at its high-level segment (see General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

8. In paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/27, the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Council, when it considered the themes for its high-level and coordination segments, information about the multi-year work programmes of the functional commissions. The requested information is contained in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2003 which will be before the Council.

9. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1

Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segments since 1995

1995	Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.
1996	International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities.
1997	Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade.
1998	Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for the developing countries and the least developed among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization.
1999	The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.
2000	Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.
2001	The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.
2002	The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development.
2003	Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

II. Possible themes for the coordination segment

10. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1,[1] the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (see E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

11. The agreed conclusions on strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it to fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see A/57/3, agreed conclusions 2002/1), suggest that the Council shall continue to carry out, each year, at its coordination segment, a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and summits. The theme could be related to the theme of the high-level segment, respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme. In making decisions for the related themes for the coordination segment of the following year, the Council should seek to identify themes, including on new and evolving issues, which will add value to international efforts to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of all other major United Nations conferences and summits.

12. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2001/41, decided to devote the coordination segment of one of its substantive sessions, before 2005, to the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2[2] on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

A. Proposals of Member States

13. The Secretary-General had consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 21 March 2003, as a result of which he received the following written proposals for a theme:

(a) Greece, on behalf of the European Union: "Gender mainstreaming";

(b) Azerbaijan: "The role of the Economic and Social Council in enhancing effective employment of official development assistance for sustainable development";

(c) Canada: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the

gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system in accordance with Council resolution 2001/41";

(d) Congo: "Promotion of gender equality with a view to achieving development goals and those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration";

(e) Japan: "A review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system";

(f) Morocco: "Coordination and harmonization of financial and monetary policies in the context of the follow-up to and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus".

B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

14. The United Nations Secretariat had consulted the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system through a letter dated 17 March 2003, as a result of which the Secretary-General received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT):

(i) "The role of the United Nations in promoting adequate access to drinking water and sanitation, particularly for women and children living in poverty";

(ii) "The role of the Economic and Social Council in achieving the Millennium Development Goals";

(b) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific:

(i) "Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS";

(ii) "The role of the Economic and Social Council in coordinating and complementing national efforts in monitoring the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals";

(iii) "Strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council to complement and support national efforts in the implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to the United Nations conferences and summits on economic, social and sustainable development";

(c) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:

(i) "Rights-based approach to development, peace and equality within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and gender mainstreaming";

(ii) "Intensify efforts for coordinating data collection disaggregated by sex (or broken down by gender) in the context of development and Millennium Development Goals indicators";

(iii) "Role of the United Nations in building the information society in developing countries, with emphasis on short- and medium-term action plans and creating partnerships among stakeholders";

(iv) "Coordinated follow-up on implementation of World Trade Organization-related agreements";

(v) "Strengthening and building the capacity of States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in terms of developing alternative sources to supplement custom-based trade data and promoting development of electronic commerce infrastructure/supporting service by enhancing information and communication technologies (ICTs) policies at the national and regional levels";

(d) United Nations Population Fund: "Role of the Economic and Social Council in promoting a cross-cutting agenda, integrating and coordinating the goals of all major United Nations conferences and summits, to enhance sustainability for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and rapid poverty eradication";

(e) World Food Programme: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system".

(f) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS:

(i) "The impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls — reaching the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment; a prerequisite for a successful implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS;

(ii) "Reversing the global spread of HIV/AIDS — integrating the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly at its special session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001";

(g) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system";

(h) International Maritime Organization: "Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes and the consequential effect on the advancement of economic and social equality in developing countries";

(i) International Fund for Agricultural Development: "Indigenous peoples";

(j) International Atomic Energy Agency: "Holistic approaches for water, health and food for sustainable development".

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

15. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called upon the Economic and Social Council to organize periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, including the means of implementation.

16. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-seventh session, requested the Economic and Social Council to consider deciding to devote its coordination segment in 2004 to a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (see E/CN.6/2003/L.3/Rev.1).

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

17. In selecting a theme for its coordination segment, the Economic and Social Council may wish to take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system;

(e) The theme could be related to the theme of the high-level segment, respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme;

(f) The theme, including on new and evolving issues, should add value to international efforts to achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

18. The Economic and Social Council, in choosing its theme, may also wish to take into consideration information about the functional commissions' multi-year work programmes (see para. 8 above), as contained in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2003.

19. Themes examined by the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segment in previous years are listed in box 2.

Box 2

Themes considered by the Economic and Social Council at its coordination segments

1995	Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.
1996	Coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes).
1997	Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.
	Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation.
1998	Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
1999	Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development.
2000	Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.
	Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda.
2001	The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.
2002.	Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.
2003	The role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

20. It should also be underscored that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. Paragraph 57 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 provided that the Council should give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also choose a sectoral theme, should it decide to do so, at its substantive session.

III. Proposals by the Secretary-General

21. In the Millennium Declaration, heads of State undertook to address the special needs of the least developed countries. The Programme of Action adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries provided a framework for a global partnership to advance sustained economic growth and sustainable development in these countries. The intergovernmental review of the Programme of Action is important to ensure that there is sustained implementation. The Council has an important role in the follow-up to the Conference: the Brussels Programme of Action invited it to devote an annual agenda item to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action, and to examine at regular intervals this review and coordination at its high-level segment. The Council can notably help to mobilize all partners in implementing commitments made and to foster international cooperation in this regard. It can galvanize the efforts of the United Nations system, including international financial institutions and other multilateral organizations, to mainstream the implementation of the programme of action in their respective programme of work and intergovernmental processes.

22. In the light of the above, it is suggested that the theme of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 be: "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". This would also be consistent with decision 2001/320 of the Council to consider, at a substantive session before 2005, devoting a high-level segment to the review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

23. The Council could consider devoting a session of its one-day policy dialogue with heads of international financial and trade institutions to reviewing finance and trade issues affecting the situation of least developed countries.

24. The Economic and Social Council decided in its agreed conclusions 2002/1 that the theme of its coordination segment could be related to the theme of the high-level segment respecting decisions already made by the Council, thus enabling the Council to address both the policy and system-wide coordination aspects of the theme. Furthermore, the report of the Secretary-General for the coordination segment suggests that the Council introduce greater thematic unity in its sessions. A part of the coordination segment could accordingly be devoted to "Coordination issues of the United Nations system activities in least developed countries". The operational activities segment could address, among others, "Funding of operational activities in the least developed countries". Likewise, the humanitarian affairs segment could address challenges linked to the United Nations system's work in least developed countries.

25. In addition, it is suggested that at the coordination segment the Council adopt, as a second theme, "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system". The Economic and Social Council agreed to devote, before 2005, a coordination segment to a review and appraisal of the implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2. This would be the occasion for the Council to review progress in implementing the broad-ranging recommendations it addressed then to organizations and bodies of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into their work. Such a discussion

would enable the Council to address gender equality, a theme that ran through all conferences. The Commission on the Status of Women should be invited to prepare this discussion of the Council at its 2004 session. All other functional commissions, intergovernmental bodies and organizations of the United Nations system would be invited to report back to the Council on their own progress in mainstreaming the gender perspective. An appropriate number of days should be allocated to the coordination segment to enable it to devote adequate attention to the two themes proposed.

26. In the Council's coordination segment and in the ad hoc open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, the question whether the Economic and Social Council should adopt a multi-year programme of work for the themes of its segments has been discussed. The Council may wish to bear this in mind as it decides on its themes for 2004.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 22.

[2] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. IV, para. 4.